



**Stockpile Drill Prepares Healthcare Workers for Bioterror**  
**By Governor Mike Johanns**  
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Dear Nebraska Neighbors:

A biological act of terrorism is an event that we hope and pray never happens. But should it occur, warning periods are expected to be very short and tremendous personnel and material resources will be required. It will be absolutely essential that a coordinated public health response take place, one that involves state, regional and local public health officials, local emergency management directors, private health care providers and communities.

For some time now, we've been laying the groundwork for a rapid response to biological weapons. I'm proud to report that Nebraska has a plan in place to protect our citizens. That plan is the direct result of the commitment of Nebraska's Homeland Security Policy Group, led by Lt. Gov. Dave Heineman, and the Nebraska Health and Human Services System in collaboration with local public health departments, private health care providers, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and others.

As part of that preparation, HHSS recently conducted a tactical exercise with the Strategic National Stockpile, a vast supply of medicine, vaccine and medical supplies that can be used in the event of a threat to public health.

During the last week of July, state employees and local response team members from Omaha and Offutt Air Force Base participated in drills to test our operational plans for the arrival of the stockpile in Nebraska. The drills were invaluable in that they provided us with the opportunity to train individuals who might be involved in the distribution of the antibiotics, vaccines and other medications that would be vitally important should a bioterrorism event take place.

If an event occurred, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention will ship the stockpile package, which consists of eight semi-truck loads, to Nebraska within 12 hours. The medicines and equipment will then be redistributed to six regional locations in the state so they can, in turn, be sent to the areas that need the supplies.

Providing these materials in a short time is an assurance from the federal government. In turn, the commitment of the state is to make sure the supplies reach their destinations as quickly as possible. This will be accomplished through the dedication of state and local health officials and local medical emergency response team members.

The drill last week was a display of hard work as teams repackaged “mock” antibiotics, relayed information to a central command center and played out scenarios of everything that could happen if a real event were to happen. The drill helped ensure that health care personnel can work together to achieve the common objective – to guarantee our ability to open, break down, and distribute a huge regional supply of drugs and medical supplies to counties in need in the event of a biological attack or other public health emergency.

Our heightened state of alert has made the preparations for bioterrorism even more imperative, and it’s good to know that the Strategic National Stockpile is available to our **“Nebraska United”** if it’s needed. It’s also good to know that there are responsible Nebraskans who will see that those supplies get distributed.